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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5968
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 8990
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 5003
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY 4476
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 1732
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2089
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2059
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 005214

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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KE](#)
SUBJECT: KENYA: THE BIWOTT SIDE OF THE KANU STORY

REF: A. NAIROBI 5129
[1](#)B. NAIROBI 5099

Classified By: Political Counselor Larry Andre for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In a December 7 conversation with Poloff, newly elected KANU Secretary General Josephine Ojiambo made the case for the Nicholas Biwott-led coup in the party. Ojiambo, a Parliamentary hopeful, insisted the matter was purely an issue of internal party democracy, contrary to observers and the majority of KANU MPs who are convinced the government was behind the hostile takeover. END SUMMARY.

PAYBACK TIME

[1](#)2. (C) Confident in her legitimacy as the newly elected KANU Secretary General, Josephine Ojiambo told poloff on December

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7 that the Biwott group undertook its takeover to rescue the party from bad leadership. The "ordinary" party membership had grown frustrated with (former) Chairman Uhuru Kenyatta and his allies making decisions without consideration of the views of others in the party. She singled out in particular key Kenyatta supporter MP William Ruto ("young and arrogant because he had Moi's support"). Ojiambo accused Ruto, one of the first and most adamant ODM-K supporters in KANU, of having gone too far speaking for the party. Ruto was Secretary General until Ojiambo's election. The sidelined

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KANU party members felt that Kenyatta owed them more. "We all put aside our interests in the party to support Kenyatta in 2002 because that is what Moi wanted," she stated; "we all sacrificed."

BY THE BOOK

[1](#)3. (C) Ojiambo asserted that the November 25-26 Mombasa delegates' meeting (ref B), called by Biwott, at which the rival slate of officers was elected, was legitimate. Well before that conference, the Biwott group had approached Kenyatta and raised their concerns, but he was unresponsive, she said. The KANU constitution has a "safety valve" which allows members to seek redress against rogue leadership, she explained. The branch leaders can call a delegates' meeting if they give the Chairman 21 days, notice, which, she said,

they did. Describing steps her group took to resolve the impasse, Ojiambo said that prior to Mombasa, the Biwott supporters held a party meeting in Nairobi to discuss the issue of coalition with ODM-K. The Biwott faction is not against coalitions, she added, they just wanted the decision-making to be more democratic within the party. On the company she keeps -- Biwott -- Ojiambo was dismissive: "everyone, on all political sides here, has skeletons in their closet," she asserted.

COMMENT

¶4. (C) To most observers, including us, it is apparent that the government influenced the Registrar's decision to recognize the Biwott slate, but the political fallout remains unclear. The Biwott group has firmer legal standing, thanks to the Registrar (ref B), but in the eyes of Kenyans, Kenyatta is a victim of dirty tricks, boosting his national image. Kenyatta remains the Leader of the Official Opposition as far as Parliament is concerned (ref A).

¶5. (C) Young, female, and focused on women's issues, Ojiambo is the kind of MP Kenya needs more of. Her choice of political friends, however, is not encouraging -- though we suspect she likely signed on with Biwott, one of Kenya's most reviled and feared politicians, mostly for his financial backing of her parliamentary campaign. END COMMENT.

BIO NOTE

¶6. (SBU) Confident and articulate, Josephine Ojiambo, a medical doctor, first ran unsuccessfully for Parliament in ¶2002. Committed to women's empowerment, Ojiambo was until her recent election as KANU Secretary General the party's Gender Secretary. The daughter of NARC nominated MP Julia Ojiambo (now an opposition supporter), Josephine is a longtime contact of the Embassy. Born in 1961, Josephine earned both her Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degrees at the University of Nairobi before completing her studies at the University of Jerusalem, where she earned a Master's in public health and community medicine. She plans to contest in the Westlands, Nairobi constituency.

RANNEBERGER